

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 WELLIN 01254 130353Z
ACTION PM-05

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INFO AMEMBASSY SUVA PRIORITY
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CNO WASHDC PRIORITY
CINCPAC HONOLULU PRIORITY
CINCPACFLT PEARL HARBOR HI PRIORITY

S E C R E T WELLINGTON 01254

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OCLR, US, FJ, NZ

SUBJ: PROPOSED VISIT OF USS JOHN MARSHALL (SSBN-611) TO
SUVA, FIJI DURING PERIOD 13-16 APR 1978 (S)

REF: A. CINCPACFLT 031701Z MAR 78
B. SECSTATE 060833 DTG 091903Z MAR 78

1. (S) REF A PROPOSED VISIT OF USS JOHN MARSHALL (SSBN-611) TO SUVA, FIJI IN APR 78; REF B ALLUDED TO A PREVIOUS VISIT REQUEST IN 1976 INVOLVING THE USS TRUXTUN (CGN-35) AND SOLICITED SUVA'S VIEWS ON PROPOSED VISIT.

2. (S) ALTHOUGH I OFFICIALLY STEPPED DOWN AS AMBASSADOR TO FIJI EFFECTIVE 1 MARCH, AND REALIZING THAT AMB DESIGNATE CONDON IS AWARE OF THIS PROPOSAL, PERHAPS THE FOLLOWING OBSERVATIONS, BASED UPON A NUMBER OF YEARS INTERACTION WITH THE GOF LEADERSHIP, MAY BE OF SOME HELP IN CONSIDERING THIS PROPOSED VISIT:

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 WELLIN 01254 130353Z

A. THE SUCCESSFUL NPW VISITS TO BOTH NR AND AUSTRALIA UNDOUBTEDLY HAVE HELPED TO ALLAY MANY OF THE CONCERNS EXPRESSED BY THE GOF IN 1976 - HOWEVER SOME FURTHER QUESTIONS IN EITHER THE SAFETY/INDEMNITY AREAS CANNOT BE RULED OUT.

B. WE HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN OPENING UP NZ TO SSN VISITS AND SHOULD SUPPORT USN EFFORTS TO SCHEDULE NPW VISITS IN THE ISLANDS. HOWEVER, THE SELECTION OF A STRATEGIC BALLISTIC MISSILE LAUNCHING SUBMARINE WOULD APPEAR TO BE SETTING FOR OURSELVES THE MOST DIFFICULT CASE IN OUR INITIAL EFFORTS. MY OBSERVATIONS IN NZ CONVINCE ME THAT AN SSBN VISIT HERE WOULD BE AN EXTREMELY DIFFICULT MATTER AS COMPARED TO EITHER A SURFACE NPW OR AN SSN. FURTHER, THIS SAME PERCEPTION (NAMELY, THAT AN SSBN REPRESENTS A MUCH MORE VIABLE TARGET FOR HOSTILE STRATEGIC MISSILES) MAY VERY WELL BE SHARED WITHIN PORTIONS OF THE GOF AND THE OPPOSITION. GIVEN THE POLITICAL TURMOIL WHICH THE GOF EXPERIENCED AS A RESULT OF THE ELECTIONS LAST YEAR, IT MAY NOT BE READY TO TAKE ON THIS PARTICULAR ISSUE YET.

C. WHILE I APPRECIATE THE SCHEDULING PROBLEMS WHICH A SHORTAGE OF NPW'S PRESENTS THE NAVY, I FEEL THAT WE WOULD BE BETTER ADVISED TO GET OUR FOOT IN THE DOOR WITH A POTENTIALLY LESS-CONTENTIOUS NPW VISIT. EITHER A SURFACE NPW OR, FAILING IN THAT, AN SSN.

D. FINALLY, THE TIMING OF THE VISIT (JUST A FEW DAYS PRIOR TO AMB DESIGNATE CONDON'S ARRIVAL) MAY NOT BE OPTIMUM. THE NEW AMB MAY WISH TO SETTLE IN ON A NOTE OTHER THAN THE VISIT OF A POSSIBLY CONTROVERSIAL SHIP TYPE.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 WELLIN 01254 130353Z

3. (U) AGAIN, MY INTENTION IS MERELY TO OFFER THESE THOUGHTS FOR CONSIDERATION BASED ON MY EXPERIENCE OVER A PERIOD OF YEARS, REALIZING THAT THE ONBOARD PERSONNEL SITUATION AT AMEMB SUVA IS PRESENTLY IN A STATE OF FLUX. SELDEN

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NNN

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